

was wretched and vicious.

Particular evil customs shock the modern reader. To avoid the cost and trouble of rearing children, the lower classes with horrible frequency and indifference, exposed their infants to die. The old family discipline was gone. The growth of divorce was reeled at, as in our own day, by the satirists of the time. Slavery threw its shadow across the Roman world. At the gladiatorial sports, delicate ladies thronged the benches of the amphitheater, without shrinking at the agonies of the dying; and the games open in size and in fantastic character rivaled they seem to us a blot beyond anything else in human history.

Under Trajan one set of games continued 123 days. In a single day's games, when the Coliseum was first opened by Titus, 5000 animals were slain. The fabled spectators demanded ever new novelties, and the exhibitors sought out fantastic forms of combat. Thousands of men fought at once in hostile armies. Sea fights were imitated on artificial lakes. Distant regions were scoured for new varieties of beasts to slay and be slain. Women entered the arena as gladiators, and

dwarfs engaged one another in deadly combat. The wealthy aristocrats laid wagers upon the skill of their favorite gladiators, as with us at the prize ring.

Yet it is certain that a picture from such materials alone is grossly misleading. There was much good, though it made less noise than its evil. Some old, rude virtues were going out of fashion; but new, gentler virtues were coming in. The un-enslaved population of North Italy and of Gaul, Spain, and Britain, and the great middle class over all the empire, remained essentially sound in morals.

EMPIRE

MORALS

Many writers dwell upon the immorality of the Roman society under the Empire. It is easy to blacken the picture unduly. The records give most prominence to the court and the capital; and there the truth is dark enough. During some reigns, the atmosphere of the court was rank with hideous debauchery. At all times, many of the great nobles were sunk in coarse orgies; and the rabble of Rome, defiled with the offences of all nations, was ignorant, cruel, and wicked. In other great cities, also, the most